



**KEVIN L. FAULCONER**

**MAYOR**

March 22, 2019

San Diego Congressional Delegation  
Honorable Reps. Susan Davis, Duncan Hunter, Mike Levin,  
Scott Peters and Juan Vargas  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Federal Investment in Transboundary Sewage Infrastructure on the U.S.-Mexico border

Honorable Members of Congress:

We, the mayors of the five cities of south San Diego County, write to express our appreciation for your tireless efforts to address the ongoing cross-border sediment, trash, and sewage flows along the U.S.-Mexico border. We respectfully request your consideration to request funding in the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY 2020) appropriations bills to help resolve the problem. This is a long-standing issue that grows more acute each year. Given the international nature of this environmental problem, the U.S. Congress is uniquely positioned to help San Diego County resolve it.

As you know, communities along the U.S.-Mexico border are suffering the consequences of antiquated or poorly maintained, and sometimes non-existent, wastewater infrastructure on both sides of the border. A significant amount of untreated sewage, sediment, and trash have been entering the Tijuana River Watershed and flowing into San Diego County's coastal waterways since the 1930s. A large portion of the Watershed (approximately 75 percent) is within Mexico, but it drains into the Tijuana River Estuary in the United States and ultimately flows to the Pacific Ocean via the City of Imperial Beach.

These ongoing sewage overflows were highlighted by an unprecedented spill in February 2017, when an estimated 143 million gallons of raw sewage flowed into the Tijuana River and down streamed to the Pacific Ocean. Such sewage spills, along with the sediment and trash, not only highlight infrastructure challenges but also consequently threaten the health of U.S. citizens and border agents, harm important estuarine land and water of international significance, force closure of beaches, compromise border security, risk and directly affect U.S. military readiness at nearby installations.



Additional infrastructure projects are needed on both sides of the border to effectively address transboundary sewage, sediment, and trash overflows. Officials from Regions 6 and 9 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have identified a multitude of projects totaling \$340 million that could entirely resolve this dire situation.

Therefore, as Congress looks ahead to the FY 2020 budget cycle, we hope you will support funding for transboundary projects, specifically:

1) A minimum of \$25 million for the Border 2020/U.S.-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Program (BWIP). The Border 2020 Program was implemented under the 1983 La Paz Agreement. It is a critical partnership of federal, state, local, and tribal governments in the United States and Mexico and builds on the Border 2012 Environmental Program working to protect the environment and public health in the U.S.-Mexico border region. It aims to: reduce air pollutions; improve access to clean and safe water; promote materials management, waste management, and clean sites; enhance joint preparedness for environmental response; and enhance compliance assurance and environmental stewardship.

Continuance of this funding is essential for finding long-term solutions to address direct discharges of untreated sewage into the Tijuana River due to the failure of wastewater infrastructure in Mexico, as well as long-term solutions for the excessive sediment and trash laden storm water flows originating from Mexico, which affect coastal water quality in the United States. The BWIP program was initially funded at \$100 million per year, but, over the last 20 years, has been continuously reduced to its current level of less than \$10 million per year. In the President's FY 2020 Budget, BWIP funding was eliminated.

2) Funding for Treasury's International Programs, which includes funding for the North American Development Bank (NADB). The NADB's mission is: "To provide financing, as well as technical and other assistance, to support the development and implementation of infrastructure projects that help preserve, protect and enhance the environment of the border region in order to advance the well-being of the people of the United States and Mexico." As you consider FY 2020 budget requests, we respectfully suggest you consider putting forward an appropriations request that includes a general capital increase (GCI) for the NADB for infrastructure projects on both sides of the border. The United States and Mexico each have a 50 percent voting share in the NADB, and a GCI requires the approval of both nations. We also suggest that you consider advocating for authorization language that either directs the NADB to fund infrastructure projects that specifically address the situation in the Tijuana River Watershed, or more broadly directs the NADB to fund infrastructure projects that address transboundary sewage, sediment and trash overflow issues along the U.S. Southern Border. The more broadly worded language should include the Tijuana River Watershed along with other border communities in Arizona, New Mexico, or Texas, that may be facing similar challenges.

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Thank you for your consideration of these suggestions, which we are in the process of submitting through your FY 2020 appropriations request process. We look forward to working closely with you toward finding a solution to the Tijuana River Watershed issue in 2019.

Sincerely,



Kevin L. Faulconer  
Mayor  
City of San Diego



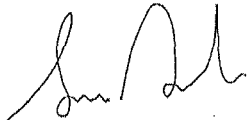
Mary Salas  
Mayor  
City of Chula Vista



Alejandra Sotelo-Solis  
Mayor  
City of National City



Richard Bailey  
Mayor  
City of Coronado



Serge Dedina  
Mayor  
City of Imperial Beach